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(71) Applicant(s)

Hewlett-Packard Company
 (Incorporated in USA - Delaware)
 3000 Hanover Street, Palo Alto,
 California 94304, United States of America

(72) Inventor(s)

Barry Allan Thomas Brown
 Abigail Jane Sellen

(74) Agent and/or Address for Service

Richard Anthony Lawrence
 Hewlett-Packard Limited, IP Section,
 Filton Road, Stoke Gifford, BRISTOL,
 BS34 8QZ, United Kingdom

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(54) Abstract Title

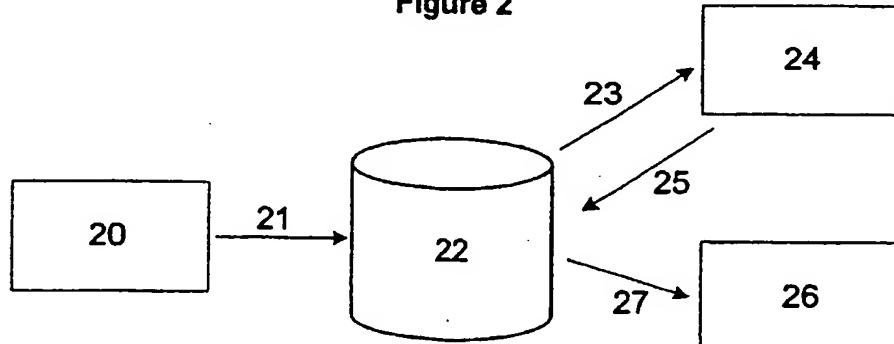
A method of sending data files, e.g. audio files

(57) The invention provides means for a first user to compile a music playlist 20 featuring a plurality of digital audio tracks (e.g. popular songs) and to send it 23 to a second user, potentially for a fee. The digital audio tracks may be sent with the playlist, or alternatively the playlist may just contain keys which can then be used 25,27 to obtain the tracks from a server 22, e.g. a webserver. Restricted playback of the tracks may be specified, such that each track may only be listened to a limited number of times, or for a limited duration. Alternatively only a trial portion of each song is sent to the recipient. By charging a fee, royalty payments to copyright owners can be made.

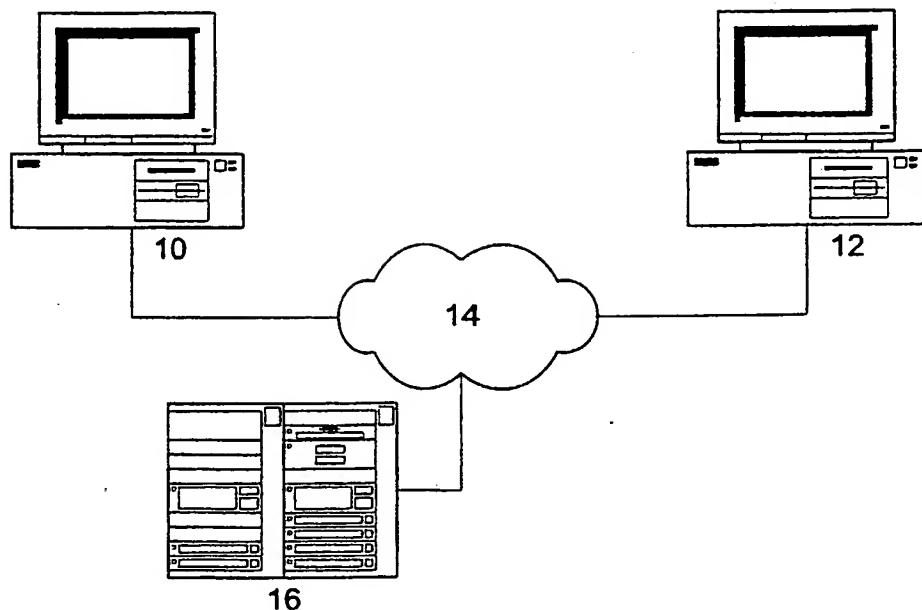
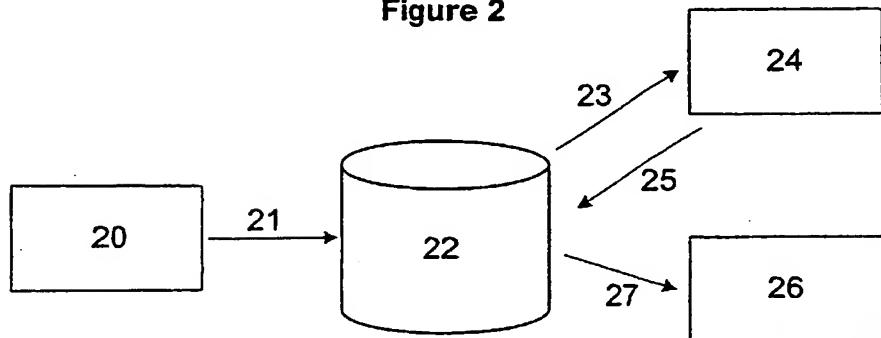
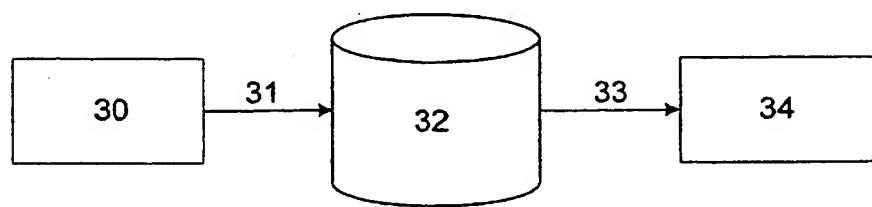
Peer-to-peer transfer of data files is also described, with the data being sent via a network having a server configured to record details of the digital data files being sent and to bill a user accordingly.

As a further alternative, a compilation of audio tracks, sourced from the first user's computer or a server, may be written to a portable music storage device (e.g. a compact disc or an audio cassette) which is then sent to the second user, optionally together with a custom-printed inlay.

Figure 2



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Figure 1**Figure 2****Figure 3**

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Figure 4

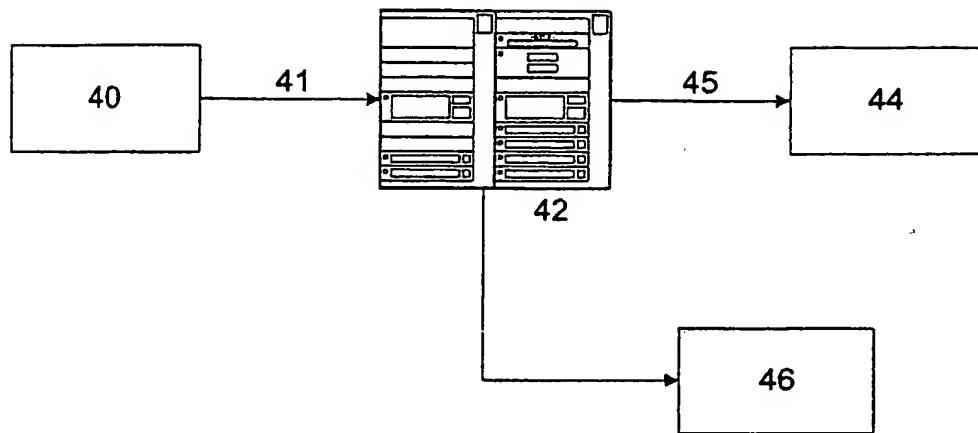
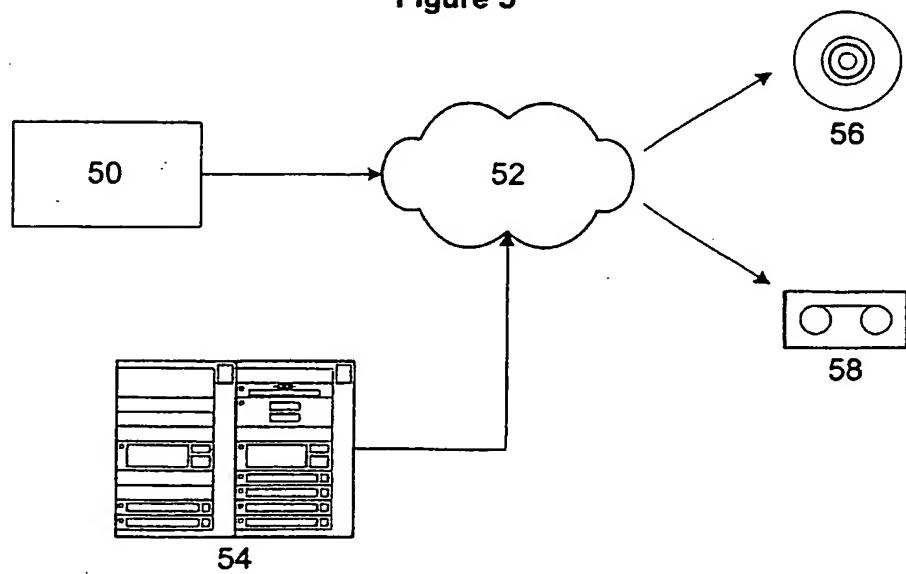


Figure 5



A METHOD OF SENDING DATA

This invention relates to a method of sending data, in particular, audio data such as music. It is to be understood, and it will be appreciated, that any references herein to 'music' should 5 be taken to include spoken word recordings and other recordings such as those of radio programmes. It will also be appreciated that the method and apparatus described herein would equally apply to video recordings.

BACKGROUND TO THE INVENTION

- 10 Compilations of music are often prepared as gifts for friends. An owner of a collection of CDs, cassettes or minidisks may copy certain selected tracks onto a blank cassette or minidisk, or a writeable CD, in order to create a new compilation to be given to a friend. The tracks that are copied are selected in light of the owner's preferences, and also in accordance with what they believe their friend will find interesting or enjoyable.
- 15 It is, however, generally appreciated that creating a compilation is a cumbersome and time consuming activity. As the user proceeds with the recording process, several CDs, cassettes and/or minidisks inevitably need to be interchanged on the user's music system.
- 20 The use of music files (e.g. MP3 files) stored on a computer may partly facilitate the assembly of such a compilation. The Napster Internet-based system has become widely used to share MP3 music files between users, and it is possible to use it to create personalised compilation recordings.

In addition to the issue of inconvenience, a further problem (and one that is of particular relevance in the case of the Napster system) is that the creation of personalised compilations may often be an infringement of the copyright owned by the music publishers, songwriters and recording artists. The music industry seeks a means by which they can

5 monitor unauthorised copying and generate a revenue stream from users' sharing and copying of music.

As discussed in the Hewlett-Packard Laboratories Technical Report HPL-2001-102, it has been found that the copying of music, either by traditional means such as tape-to-tape

10 copying, or by using more modern systems such as Napster, can actually help to promote music sales, since many people use copied music as a means to "try before you buy". Through sampling an artist's recordings via a compilation a friend has produced, a listener may be inspired into purchasing one of the artist's commercially-available recordings themselves. A properly controlled "try before you buy" facility (unlike the peer-to-peer music

15 copying enabled by Napster) would therefore be desirable and commercially valuable to music publishers and record companies.

It is a general object of the present invention to overcome or at least mitigate the problems and shortcomings identified above.

20

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

According to a first aspect of the invention there is provided a method of sending a plurality of digital data files specified by a first user to a second user, the method being performed by a processor and comprising the steps: (a) receiving instructions from the first user identifying

25 the said plurality of data files to be sent to the second user, the data files being stored on a

server accessible by the second user via a network, with each data file having a corresponding unique identifier; (b) sending each of the unique identifiers corresponding to each of the data files to be sent to the second user via the network; (c) receiving notification from the second user of their being in possession of the said unique identifiers; and (d)

5 sending the said data files from the server to the second user via the network. This advantageously provides a simple and convenient means of sending a compilation of digital data files from a first user to a second user. A further advantage is that the first user is not required to send the said data files themselves to the second user, but instead merely sends the corresponding unique identifiers, leaving the second user to retrieve the data files

10 themselves from the server.

Preferably the digital data files comprise audio data. Accordingly, the method provides a means by which music play lists may readily be compiled and sent to others.

15 Preferably the server is a webserver.

Preferably the digital audio files are in MP3 format. This format is globally-recognised and provides a standardised means for sharing, sending, receiving and playing digital audio.

20 Optionally, the second user may only play each digital audio file a predetermined number of times, or for a limited duration of time. These options enable the method to provide a "try before you buy" facility, in which the user is able to sample the audio files in a limited capacity. An alternative option is that the second user may only play a limited part of each digital audio file. Such a limited part may be, for example, the introduction, first verse and

25 chorus of a popular song, and again provides the advantage of enabling the second user to

experience the recording prior to making the commitment to purchase it for himself. The first and second users may be one and the same individual, using the method as a means of providing himself with a music compilation for his personal trial.

- 5 Preferably the method further comprises the step of billing a user for the files sent. This advantageously provides a means for generating revenue for the music publishers, copyright owners and recording artists. A proportion of the revenue may also be payable to the operator of the said method.
- 10 According to a second aspect of the invention, there is provided a method of sending a plurality of digital audio files specified by a first user to a second user, the method being performed by a processor and comprising the steps: (a) receiving instructions from the first user identifying the said plurality of digital audio files to be sent to the second user, the digital audio files being stored on a server accessible by the second user via a network; (b)
- 15 compiling a playlist comprising the digital audio files specified in step (a); and (c) sending the said playlist, with each of the said digital audio files, to the second user via the network. This has the advantage that the digital audio files are transmitted directly to the second user, thereby enabling him to listen to them straight away. The audio files themselves are sent directly from the server to the second user, thereby again saving the first user from having to
- 20 perform this file transfer.

Preferably the server is a webserver.

Preferably the digital audio files are in MP3 format.

Optionally, the second user may only play each digital audio file a predetermined number of times, or for a limited duration of time. Alternatively, optionally the second user may only play a limited part of each digital audio file. The advantages of sending the second user digital audio files that may only be listened to in a limited fashion have previously been
5 discussed herein.

Again, preferably the method further comprises the step of billing a user for the files sent.

According to a third aspect of the present invention there is provided a method of sending a
10 plurality of digital data files specified by a first user to a second user, the method being performed by a processor and comprising the steps: (a) receiving instructions from the first user identifying the said plurality of digital data files to be sent to the second user, the digital data files being stored on a file store local to the first user; and (b) sending the said plurality of digital data files to the second user via a network, the network including a webserver
15 configured to record characteristic details of the digital data files being sent and to bill a user in respect of the said digital data files being sent. This advantageously provides a means for peer-to-peer transmission of digital data files, but since they are sent via a webserver configured to monitor the files being sent and to bill the user accordingly, a revenue stream may be provided to those entitled to such compensation. When applied to the transmission
20 of digital audio files, it will be appreciated that this provides a method that overcomes a major shortcoming of the Napster system, in which the copyright owners are not remunerated following the sharing of their music.

Preferably the digital data files comprise audio data.

Preferably the digital audio files are in MP3 format.

- Optionally the second user may only play each digital audio file a predetermined number of times, or for a limited duration of time. Alternatively, optionally the second user may only
- 5 play a limited part of each digital audio file.

According to a fourth aspect of the invention, there is provided a method of sending a plurality of digital audio files specified by a first user to a second user, the method being performed by an processor operating on a webserver and comprising the steps: (a) receiving

10 instructions from the first user via a network, identifying the said plurality of digital audio files to be sent to the second user; (b) writing the said digital audio files to a portable music storage device; and (c) sending the portable music storage device to the second user. This provides a means by which a compilation of music may be readily created and sent to a second user who is not in possession of a computer or a connection to the Internet, since

15 the digital audio files are supplied on a conventional portable music storage device.

Preferably, the digital audio files identified in step (a) are held on a file store local to the first user. Alternatively, preferably the digital audio files identified in step (a) are held on a webserver.

20 Preferably the portable music storage device sent to the second user in step (c) is of a format selected by the first user from a group comprising: compact disc, audio cassette, minidisk. The format selected by the first user will be appropriate to the capabilities of the second user's music playback equipment.

25

Preferably the portable music storage device sent to the second user is accompanied by a custom-printed inlay giving details of the digital audio files written onto the said portable music storage device. This advantageously provides an intuitive and tangible means by which the second user may see what has been recorded onto the portable music storage 5 device, and adds value to the product - particularly if it has been sent from the first user as a gift.

Optionally, only a limited part of each digital audio file is written onto the said portable music storage device. This creates a compilation of trial samples of the pieces of music, again 10 enabling the recipient to experience them before deciding to buy the full versions.

According to a fifth aspect of the invention there is provided a method of sending a digital data file specified by a first user to a second user, the method being performed by a processor and comprising the steps: (a) receiving instructions from the first user identifying 15 the said data file to be sent to the second user, the data file being stored on a server accessible by the second user via a network, and the data file having a corresponding unique identifier; (b) sending the unique identifier corresponding to the data file to be sent, to the second user via the network; (c) receiving notification from the second user of their being in possession of the said unique identifier; and (d) sending the said data file from the server 20 to the second user via the network.

According to a sixth aspect of the invention there is also provided a method of sending a digital data file specified by a first user to a second user, the method being performed by a processor and comprising the steps: (a) receiving instructions from the first user identifying 25 the said digital data file to be sent to the second user, the digital data file being stored on a

file store local to the first user; and (b) sending the said digital data file to the second user via a network, the network including a webserver configured to record the details of the digital data file being sent and to bill a user in respect of the said digital data file being sent.

- 5 According to a seventh aspect of the invention there is also provided a method of sending a digital audio file specified by a first user to a second user, the method being performed by a processor operating on a webserver and comprising the steps: (a) receiving instructions from the first user via a network, identifying the said digital audio file to be sent to the second user; (b) writing the said digital audio file to a portable music storage device; and (c) sending
10 the portable music storage device to the second user.

It should be appreciated that the fifth, sixth and seventh aspects of the invention are particularly applicable to the transmission of single digital audio files, and a "try before you buy" facility may be incorporated as previously discussed with respect to the first, second
15 and third aspects of the invention.

According to an eighth aspect of the invention there is also provided a computer program, executable by a processor to: (a) receive instructions from a first user identifying a data file to be sent to a second user, the data file being stored on a server accessible by the second user via a network, and the data file having a corresponding unique identifier; (b) send the unique identifier corresponding to the data file to be sent, to the second user via the network;
20 (c) receive notification from the second user of their being in possession of the said unique identifier; and (d) send the said data file from the server to the second user via the network.

According to a ninth aspect of the invention there is provided a computer program, executable by a processor to: (a) receive instructions from a first user identifying a plurality of digital audio files to be sent to a second user, the digital audio files being stored on a server accessible by the second user via a network; (b) compile a playlist comprising the 5 digital audio files specified in step (a); and (c) send the said playlist, with each of the said digital audio files, to the second user via the network.

According to a tenth aspect of the invention there is provided a computer program, executable by a processor to: (a) receive instructions from a first user identifying a digital 10 data file to be sent to a second user, the digital data file being stored on a file store local to the first user; and (b) send the said digital data file to the second user via a network, the network including a webserver configured to record the details of the digital data file being sent and to bill a user in respect of the said digital data file being sent.

15 According to a eleventh aspect of the invention there is provided a computer program, executable by a processor to: (a) receive instructions from a first user via a network, identifying a digital audio file to be sent to a second user; (b) operate a recording device to write the said digital audio file to a portable music storage device; and (c) execute the sending of the portable music storage device to the second user.

20

According to a twelfth aspect of the invention there is also provided a webserver operable to: (a) receive instructions from a first user identifying a data file to be sent to a second user, the data file being stored on a server accessible by the second user via a network, and the data file having a corresponding unique identifier; (b) send the unique identifier corresponding to 25 the data file to be sent, to the second user via the network; (c) receive notification from the

second user of their being in possession of the said unique identifier; and (d) send the said data file from the server to the second user via the network.

According to a thirteenth aspect of the invention there is provided a webserver operable to:

5 (a) receive instructions from a first user identifying a plurality of digital audio files to be sent to a second user, the digital audio files being stored on a server accessible by the second user via a network; (b) compile a playlist comprising the digital audio files specified in step (a); and (c) send the said playlist, with each of the said digital audio files, to the second user via the network.

10

According to a fourteenth aspect of the invention there is provided a webserver operable to:

(a) receive instructions from a first user identifying a digital data file to be sent to a second user, the digital data file being stored on a file store local to the first user; (b) record the details of the digital data file being sent and to bill a user in respect of the said digital data file being sent; and (c) send the said digital data file to the second user via a network.

15 According to a fifteenth aspect of the invention there is provided a webserver operable to: (a) receive instructions from a first user via a network, identifying a digital audio file to be sent to a second user; (b) operate a recording device to write the said digital audio file to a portable music storage device; and (c) execute the sending of the portable music storage device to the second user.

20 According to a sixteenth aspect of the invention there is also provided a digital signal, sent by a first user to a webserver, interpretable by the webserver to specify a second user and comprising digital coding to cause the webserver to send a digital code, specified by the first

user, to the second user, the webserver having a digital data file to which the said specific digital code corresponds, and the said digital code being subsequently interpretable by the webserver to cause the said digital data file to be sent to the second user.

- 5 According to a seventeenth aspect of the invention there is provided a digital signal, sent by a user to a webserver and comprising a digital code, the webserver being configured to send, on receipt of the said digital code, a file corresponding to the said code to the said user.
- 10 According to an eighteenth aspect of the invention there is provided a digital signal, sent by a first user to a webserver, interpretable by the webserver to specify a second user and comprising digital coding to cause the webserver to send a digital audio file from the webserver to the second user.

15 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Embodiments of the invention will now be described, by way of example, and with reference to the drawings in which:

Figure 1 illustrates two computers connected to a digital communications network;

Figure 2 illustrates a method by which one user may send digital audio files to a second

20 user;

Figure 3 illustrates another method by which one user may send digital audio files to a second user;

Figure 4 illustrates a method by which one user may send digital audio files to a second user, the method incorporating providing remuneration to the copyright holders of the said

25 audio files; and

Figure 5 illustrates a method by which a user may prepare a customised audio CD or cassette for sending to a second user.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

5 The method of the present invention enables a first user to create a music compilation and then send it (for example, as a gift) to a second user. However, with some of the embodiments of the invention described herein, it will be appreciated that the techniques are of broader application than just the sending of music playlists, and indeed may be applicable to the transmission of any collection of digital data files.

10

With reference to Figure 1, in a first embodiment of the invention a music compilation is created in the format of a playlist on a first user's computer 10, which is connected to the Internet 14. A webserver 16, operated by a provider of the service in accordance with this embodiment of the invention, is also connected to the Internet 14, as is a second user's computer 12, to which the playlist is to be sent. Whilst the invention is preferably operated over the Internet, it will be appreciated that an alternative data communications network could be employed instead. The computers that are referred to herein would typically be IBM (RTM) compatible personal computers (PCs), or Apple (RTM) Macintoshes (RTM), connected to the Internet and running suitable software to enable web browsing.

15

The first user takes action on his computer 10, interacting with the webserver 16 of the service provider. Firstly, the first user is presented on-screen with a list of songs (or other pieces of music) from which he may compile his playlist. These songs may be stored on his computer's local hard drive or, as is presently preferred, on the webserver 16. The use of a webserver as a central repository of music data is preferred since this may be controlled,

regulated and readily updated by the service provider (which may well be a music publishing company). The webserver is also operable to provide users with information relating to the various songs that are available, such as details of the recording artists and the album on which each song was originally released. Users may also be given the opportunity to buy a 5 physical copy of this album via the website.

As illustrated schematically in Figure 2, the first user compiles a playlist 20 according to his preferences and submits 21 this via the Internet to the webserver 22. The first user is also required to specify the identity of the intended recipient of the music compilation. In this 10 embodiment of the invention, the first user would typically specify the e-mail address of the recipient, since the delivery of the music is to be effected over the Internet. The first user may also be required to pay for the music that is to be sent to the second user, and billing may also be performed over the Internet, e.g. by credit card. The cost of each song may be dependent on its popularity at the time, and additionally, moreover, on playback restrictions 15 specified by the first user. These playback restrictions will be described in detail below. By making the first user pay for the music, royalty payments may be made to the appropriate songwriters, performers, record companies and copyright owners.

The webserver 22 then sends 23 the playlist 24 to the second user, via the Internet. In this 20 embodiment of the invention the playlist 24 that is sent does not itself contain the audio data of the songs that have been specified. Instead, the audio data files remain on the webserver 22, in essentially a centralised music database, and the playlist 24 simply comprises keys to the selected audio data files. These keys (which may be encrypted using techniques known to those skilled in the art) may then be used by the second user to retrieve the audio data 25 files from the webserver.

When the second user is ready to retrieve the audio files from the webserver, he instructs his computer to send 25 the keys to the webserver 22. Upon receipt and authentication of these keys, the webserver 22 then sends 27 the audio files 26 to the second user. The 5 audio files are typically in MP3 format, although it will be appreciated that alternative audio file formats are available.

It will also be appreciated that since the audio files may be fairly large in size and consequently time-consuming to transfer, this technique is beneficial to the first user, since 10 he is only required to notify the webserver of the contents of the playlist, and is not required to send the audio data itself.

Each audio data file that is sent to the second user may be such that it can be played an unlimited number of times. Alternatively, playback restrictions may be imposed on each 15 song by the first user, such that it may only be played a limited number of times (e.g. ten times), or for a limited duration of time (e.g. one week). A further restriction may be that only part of the song (e.g. the introduction, first verse and chorus) may be played. Variable degrees of playback restriction may be offered, for appropriately commensurate charges. The cost to the first user for sending the second user songs having restricted playback will 20 be less than if unlimited playback is chosen. The purpose of restricted playback is that the second user will be able to listen to the music on a trial basis, in order to assess whether they like it and to decide if they would wish to purchase a copy of the recording. If they do (and it has been found that people often do purchase recordings after listening to them first on a trial basis) then the website may facilitate this, providing an opportunity to buy a

physical copy of the recording, or alternatively to upgrade (possibly at reduced cost) the trial version of the song to a full version that may be listed to in an unlimited capacity.

The audio files received by the second user may be played directly from his computer, or
5 transferred to another playback device such as a portable MP3 player. If unlimited playback has been specified, the second user may elect to transfer the files onto a writeable compact disc.

A second embodiment of the invention, as illustrated schematically in Figure 3, is similar to
10 the first, in that the first user compiles the playlist 30 and notifies 31 the webserver 32 accordingly. The recipient is identified, restricted playback options are selected, and payments are made as before. However, in this embodiment a system of keys is not used. Instead, the webserver 32 sends 33 the required audio data files directly to the second user's computer 34, and playback can thereby commence as soon as the second user so
15 desires.

A third embodiment of the invention, illustrated in Figure 4, enables peer-to-peer transmission of a music playlist comprising audio data files themselves. Here, the first user compiles a playlist 40 by selecting from audio files stored on his computer's own hard drive,
20 or from a local server. As before, the recipient is also identified, restricted playback options are selected, and the appropriate payments are effected. The playlist, together with the audio files, is then sent 41 to a webserver 42. The webserver 42 is configured to charge the first user for the files being transmitted, thereby providing a royalty stream 45 to the copyright owners 46, and also sends 43 the files on to the second user 44 for playback.

Whilst the above embodiments have all discussed the sending of a plurality of audio files, it will be appreciated that the techniques described are equally applicable to the sending of single files. Also, although the examples have involved audio files, it will be appreciated that the methods are applicable to the sending of any kind of digital data files, examples being 5 video files or text-based electronic documents, for which the provision of a system for remunerating the copyright owners is just as relevant.

Although the sender of such personalised music compilations may have access to a computer connected to the Internet, many prospective recipients are not so fortunate. Also, 10 some computer users do not have speakers or a sound card, so even if they were sent compilations via the Internet they would be unable to listen to the music. To provide for such individuals, and also for those who simply prefer listening to music via more conventional means, a fourth embodiment of the invention enables the first user to specify a music compilation to be delivered to the nominated recipient on a portable music storage device. 15 Examples of such devices are compact discs, music cassettes and minidisks.

As shown in Figure 5, in this embodiment the first user 50 interacts with the provider of this service 52 via the Internet, and specifies audio files to be recorded onto a portable music storage device. These audio files may be supplied by the first user from a local file store, 20 such as the hard disk of the first user's computer, or alternatively from a webserver 54. The first user is also prompted to provide the name and delivery address of the recipient, and to select the format of the portable music storage device to be used. The service provider makes a charge that may incorporate a royalty element to go to the copyright owners, and also a service charge. The audio tracks (songs, etc.) are then recorded onto a writeable 25 compact disc 56, a music cassette 58, or another portable music storage device as

specified, which is then mailed to the intended recipient. A personalised custom-printed inlay giving details of the songs that have been transferred may also be included. Whilst it is not readily possible to limit the number of plays or the total duration of the playing of these songs, one further option that may be offered to the first user is that only trial snippets of the
5 songs be included, for a reduced charge. This effectively produces a personalised compilation of trial samples of each of the songs, enabling the recipient to experience them before deciding whether or not to buy full versions.

CLAIMS

1. A method of sending a plurality of digital data files specified by a first user to a second user, the method being performed by a processor and comprising the steps:
 - 5 (a) receiving instructions from the first user identifying the said plurality of data files to be sent to the second user, the data files being stored on a server accessible by the second user via a network, with each data file having a corresponding unique identifier;
 - (b) sending each of the unique identifiers corresponding to each of the data files to be sent to the second user via the network;
 - 10 (c) receiving notification from the second user of their being in possession of the said unique identifiers; and
 - (d) sending the said data files from the server to the second user via the network.
2. A method as claimed in Claim 1 wherein the digital data files comprise audio data.
- 15 3. A method as claimed in Claim 1 wherein the server is a webserver.
4. A method as claimed in Claim 2 wherein the digital audio files are in MP3 format.
5. A method as claimed in Claim 2 wherein the second user may only play each digital audio file a predetermined number of times.
- 20 6. A method as claimed in Claim 2 wherein the second user may only play each digital audio file for a limited duration of time.
7. A method as claimed in Claim 2 wherein the second user may only play a limited part of each digital audio file.
- 25 8. A method as claimed in Claim 1 further comprising the step of billing a user for the files sent.

9. A method of sending a plurality of digital audio files specified by a first user to a second user, the method being performed by a processor and comprising the steps:
- (a) receiving instructions from the first user identifying the said plurality of digital audio files to be sent to the second user, the digital audio files being stored on a server accessible by the second user via a network;
- (b) compiling a playlist comprising the digital audio files specified in step (a); and
- (c) sending the said playlist, with each of the said digital audio files, to the second user via the network.
10. A method as claimed in Claim 9 wherein the server is a webserver.
11. A method as claimed in Claim 9 wherein the digital audio files are in MP3 format.
12. A method as claimed in Claim 9 wherein the second user may only play each digital audio file a predetermined number of times.
13. A method as claimed in Claim 9 wherein the second user may only play each digital audio file for a limited duration of time.
14. A method as claimed in Claim 9 wherein the second user may only play a limited part of each digital audio file.
15. A method as claimed in Claim 9 further comprising the step of billing a user for the files sent.
20. A method of sending a plurality of digital data files specified by a first user to a second user, the method being performed by a processor and comprising the steps:
- (a) receiving instructions from the first user identifying the said plurality of digital data files to be sent to the second user, the digital data files being stored on a file store local to the first user; and

- (b) sending the said plurality of digital data files to the second user via a network, the network including a webserver configured to record characteristic details of the digital data files being sent and to bill a user in respect of the said digital data files being sent.
- 5 17. A method as claimed in Claim 16 wherein the digital data files comprise audio data.
18. A method as claimed in Claim 17 wherein the digital audio files are in MP3 format.
19. A method as claimed in Claim 17 wherein the second user may only play each
- 10 digital audio file a predetermined number of times.
20. A method as claimed in Claim 17 wherein the second user may only play each digital audio file for a limited duration of time.
21. A method as claimed in Claim 17 wherein the second user may only play a limited part of each digital audio file.
- 15 22. A method of sending a plurality of digital audio files specified by a first user to a second user, the method being performed by an processor operating on a webserver and comprising the steps:
- (a) receiving instructions from the first user via a network, identifying the said plurality of digital audio files to be sent to the second user;
- 20 (b) writing the said digital audio files to a portable music storage device; and
- (c) sending the portable music storage device to the second user.
23. A method as claimed in Claim 22 wherein the digital audio files identified in step (a) are held on a file store local to the first user.
24. A method as claimed in Claim 22 wherein the digital audio files identified in step
- 25 (a) are held on a webserver.

25. A method as claimed in Claim 22 wherein the portable music storage device sent to the second user in step (c) is of a format selected by the first user from a group comprising: compact disc, audio cassette, minidisk.
- 5 26. A method as claimed in Claim 22 wherein the portable music storage device sent to the second user is accompanied by a custom-printed inlay giving details of the digital audio files written onto the said portable music storage device.
27. A method as claimed in Claim 22 wherein only a limited part of each digital audio file is written onto the said portable music storage device.
- 10 28. A method of sending a digital data file specified by a first user to a second user, the method being performed by a processor and comprising the steps:
- (a) receiving instructions from the first user identifying the said data file to be sent to the second user, the data file being stored on a server accessible by the second user via a network, and the data file having a corresponding unique identifier;
- 15 (b) sending the unique identifier corresponding to the data file to be sent, to the second user via the network;
- (c) receiving notification from the second user of their being in possession of the said unique identifier; and
- (d) sending the said data file from the server to the second user via the network.
- 20 29. A method of sending a digital data file specified by a first user to a second user, the method being performed by a processor and comprising the steps:
- (a) receiving instructions from the first user identifying the said digital data file to be sent to the second user, the digital data file being stored on a file store local to the first user; and

- (b) sending the said digital data file to the second user via a network, the network including a webserver configured to record the details of the digital data file being sent and to bill a user in respect of the said digital data file being sent.
30. A method of sending a digital audio file specified by a first user to a second user, the method being performed by a processor operating on a webserver and comprising the steps:
- (a) receiving instructions from the first user via a network, identifying the said digital audio file to be sent to the second user;
- (b) writing the said digital audio file to a portable music storage device; and
- (c) sending the portable music storage device to the second user.
- 10 31. A computer program, executable by a processor to:
- (a) receive instructions from a first user identifying a data file to be sent to a second user, the data file being stored on a server accessible by the second user via a network, and the data file having a corresponding unique identifier;
- (b) send the unique identifier corresponding to the data file to be sent, to the second user via the network;
- (c) receive notification from the second user of their being in possession of the said unique identifier; and
- (d) send the said data file from the server to the second user via the network.
- 15 20 32. A computer program, executable by a processor to:
- (a) receive instructions from a first user identifying a plurality of digital audio files to be sent to a second user, the digital audio files being stored on a server accessible by the second user via a network;
- (b) compile a playlist comprising the digital audio files specified in step (a); and

- (c) send the said playlist, with each of the said digital audio files, to the second user via the network.
33. A computer program, executable by a processor to:
- (a) receive instructions from a first user identifying a digital data file to be sent to a second user, the digital data file being stored on a file store local to the first user; and
- (b) send the said digital data file to the second user via a network, the network including a webserver configured to record the details of the digital data file being sent and to bill a user in respect of the said digital data file being sent.
- 10 34. A computer program, executable by a processor to:
- (a) receive instructions from a first user via a network, identifying a digital audio file to be sent to a second user;
- (b) operate a recording device to write the said digital audio file to a portable music storage device; and
- 15 (c) execute the sending of the portable music storage device to the second user.
35. A webserver operable to:
- (a) receive instructions from a first user identifying a data file to be sent to a second user, the data file being stored on a server accessible by the second user via a network, and the data file having a corresponding unique identifier;
- 20 (b) send the unique identifier corresponding to the data file to be sent, to the second user via the network;
- (c) receive notification from the second user of their being in possession of the said unique identifier; and
- (d) send the said data file from the server to the second user via the network.
- 25 36. A webserver operable to:

- (a) receive instructions from a first user identifying a plurality of digital audio files to be sent to a second user, the digital audio files being stored on a server accessible by the second user via a network;
- (b) compile a playlist comprising the digital audio files specified in step (a); and
- 5 (c) send the said playlist, with each of the said digital audio files, to the second user via the network.

37. A webserver operable to:

- (a) receive instructions from a first user identifying a digital data file to be sent to a second user, the digital data file being stored on a file store local to the first user;
- 10 (b) record the details of the digital data file being sent and to bill a user in respect of the said digital data file being sent; and
- (c) send the said digital data file to the second user via a network.

38. A webserver operable to:

- 15 (a) receive instructions from a first user via a network, identifying a digital audio file to be sent to a second user;
- (b) operate a recording device to write the said digital audio file to a portable music storage device; and
- (c) execute the sending of the portable music storage device to the second user.

20 39. A digital signal, sent by a first user to a webserver, interpretable by the webserver to specify a second user and comprising digital coding to cause the webserver to send a digital code, specified by the first user, to the second user, the webserver having a digital data file to which the said specific digital code corresponds, and the said digital code being subsequently interpretable by the webserver to cause 25 the said digital data file to be sent to the second user.

40. A digital signal, sent by a user to a webserver and comprising a digital code, the webserver being configured to send, on receipt of the said digital code, a file corresponding to the said code to the said user.
41. A digital signal, sent by a first user to a webserver, interpretable by the webserver to specify a second user and comprising digital coding to cause the webserver to send a digital audio file from the webserver to the second user.
5



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Claims searched: all

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Databases searched:

UK Patent Office collections, including GB, EP, WO & US patent specifications, in:

UK Cl (Ed.T): H4R (RPX,RCSS,RCS,RCX); H4K (KOD4,KOD8); G5R (RB81)

Int Cl (Ed.7): G06F; G11B; H04H; H04L; H04M

Other: Online: EPODOC, WPI, JAPIO

Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Identity of document and relevant passage	Relevant to claims
X	GB 2356731 A (Russell) see the whole document	22-26, 30, 34, 38-41
X	GB 2305339 A (Ackroyd) see e.g. abstract	39-41
X	GB 2304489 A (McCauley) see e.g. page 6, lines 22 <i>et seq</i>	39-41
X	WO 99/21186 A (Tida) see e.g. page 24, line 12 to page 27, line 9 and page 62, line 21 to page 63, line 2	9-11, 15, 22, 24-26, 32, 34, 36, 38-41
X	WO 98/48532 A (Playnetwork) see e.g. page 6, lines 13-30	9-11, 15, 22, 24-26, 32, 34, 36, 38-41
X	WO 94/23394 A (Motorola) see e.g. page 28, lines 20-28	16, 17, 29, 33, 37, 39-41
X	EP 1132837 A (Lucent) see the whole document	1-3, 8-10, 15, 22, 24, 28, 30-32, 34-36, 38, 39, 41

X	Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step	A	Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art.
Y	Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of same category.	P	Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of this invention.
&	Member of the same patent family	E	Patent document published on or after, but with priority date earlier than, the filing date of this application.

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